




Inventory and Monitoring Charges Ahead

“One of the best weapons for addressing complex management problems is good scientific information. This requires good research.... [and] a tight linkage between research and management.”

—David L. Peterson
National Parks and
Protected Areas: Their Role in
Environmental Protection

In its infancy a decade ago, the Inventory and Monitoring Program flourished in 2003. It has developed from inadequately funded inventories in numerous parks and pilot monitoring focused on just 22 parks to a thriving program that encompasses all national parks—some 270 (called I&M parks)—that have significant natural resources. It owes its success in large part to the organization of the I&M parks into 32 networks designed to document the status and trends of natural resources. Using this strategic approach, parks in the various networks share funding and professional staff, obtained through the Natural Resource Challenge, and partner with hundreds of universities and federal and state agencies to complete basic park resource inventories and monitor the condition of selected resources. The program emphasizes the development of modern database and GIS systems to build institutional knowledge by documenting and organizing the resource information needed for effective science-based, managerial decision making and resource protection. The articles that follow exemplify how parks are benefiting from inventory information and how many parks in the 22 networks funded for monitoring are charging ahead to meet the information and resource protection goals. The next step is to complete all 32 I&M networks, so that, like those in operation, the 10 networks that are not funded can develop the long-term informational tools needed to safeguard the health and integrity of these parks for the future.

PARK VITAL SIGNS MONITORING NETWORKS STATUS FY 2004

-  22 monitoring networks funded FY 2001–2004 for core park vital signs
-  6 monitoring networks proposed for funding in FY 2005
-  Unfunded

